

May 9, 2008

MEMORANDUM

To: Councilmembers

From: Marc Elrich, Valerie Ervin and George Leventhal

RE: Piney Branch Elementary School swimming pool

As you know, we have been working with the city of Takoma Park, the school system and the Recreation Department to develop a plan for the rehabilitation and re-use of the swimming pool at Piney Branch Elementary School.

We believe the attached plan provides a workable approach to solving this problem that includes contributions from all parties involved. We hope the Council will agree to include \$21,700 on the reconciliation list for the Recreation Department to execute the Pool Pak service contract, and \$206,750 in the Non-Discretionary Account for Community Grants for a contract with Adventist Community Services, Inc. to operate the pool.

Full details are provided in the attached memo. Thank you for considering this!

**Plan for Reopening and Operating
Piney Branch Elementary School Pool
May 9, 2008**

Introduction

The Takoma Park City Council, in support of city residents, submits this plan for reopening and operating the Piney Branch Elementary School pool. The goal of the partnership outlined in this plan is to continue this important recreational resource in our community until a similar, more modern facility becomes available.

The pool is an essential outreach facility and the lone County recreation service to our underserved community. It is the only indoor pool for families inside the beltway. It should be the centerpiece of County recreation outreach programming in our community, integrated into the County's after-school programming for middle school students, who could come swim at the pool.

The pool cannot be compared to up-county luxury pools that cover their operating costs with revenues. (Note - those luxury pools may break even, but do not pay off the millions of dollars invested in building them).

Despite the fact that a legal agreement (MOU) requires the County to maintain and operate the pool, and the fact that the County allowed the pool to deteriorate, the City is offering a specific amount toward the costs of renovating the pool, as an indication of how important this resource is to us. MCPS has also agreed to help renovate the pool, because the pool is a huge benefit to the school.

The City is also helping find a partner to replace the YMCA as pool manager / programmer in order to improve outreach to the community. They will ensure people know the pool is available and strive to serve the underserved local residents. This can only be accomplished if all income generated by the pool goes back into pool costs. The YMCA found that expenses, such as ICB fees were too burdensome.

We strongly encourage the County to continue to take responsibility for the pool they built and own, including operating costs (such as utilities and building service staff) not covered under a partner agreement. The County Recreation Department has pool expertise that our taxpayers pay for and we expect our pool to be maintained by the County at least until such time as we get a new County model pool in our community. We ask the County to restore annual operating costs for this pool. Please note that we are not asking for new funding. The County was supporting the pool through August, and the pool was closed because the YMCA pulled out. Assuming we have a partner to fill the YMCA role, we do not understand why the County would not continue the funding of this asset built by the County and funded by the County since 1971. To not continue to appropriate the funds to keep the pool open would be a cut to longtime County social service funding to our community, and it is a cut that the community has and will continue to vigorously oppose.

This partnership was developed by a working group of Takoma Park City Council members and City residents. The City Council endorsed this plan on May 8, and presents

it to the County Council as a baseline for developing a partnership between the County government, Montgomery County Public Schools, the City, and Adventist Community Services.

Pool Reopening

The pool requires renovation to put it back into operating condition. The County estimated that the required renovation would cost \$190,000. The working group had an independent pool company assess the maintenance requirements to get the facility back into appropriate operating condition. That company provided the following estimate:

City Estimates

Renovation Item Description	Estimated Cost
Clean swimming pool and stainless steel gutters	\$5,300
Re-plumb swimming pool to eliminate the suction entrapment issue	8,500
Service two Pool Pac dehumidification units	25,000
Overhaul Strantrol control system	1,000
Refurbish pool office and counter area	8,000
Locker room repair	3,000
Water fountain replacement	1,000
Phone, computer, network lines	5,000
Safety equipment and supplies	8,000
Total	\$64,800

Recommendations

The City recommends the following:

1. The County will contract out for pool renovation work and include Winkler Pool Management, Inc. on the list of solicitation recipients. The contract should require getting the pool into working condition, rather than specifying particular work items.
2. Montgomery County Public Schools will pay the first \$50,000 of renovation expense.
3. The City will contribute \$50,000.

Pool Operations

Operating the pool requires ongoing, annual expenses, which include staffing, supplies and pool maintenance. The County estimates annual operating costs of \$320,000. The City identified Adventist Community Services (ACS) as a potential partner for programming, operating, and managing the pool. ACS is a local not for profit social services organization, who partners with the City to supplement County social services within Takoma Park. They provide safety net services, partially funded by the City, for the most vulnerable County residents living in the Takoma Park vicinity. ACS developed an estimate for operating the pool, based on the following operating hours:

Days of the Week	Times	Hours per Week
M – F	5:30 am – 7:30 am	10
M – F	4:00 pm – 10:00 pm	30
S – S	8:00 am – 8:00 pm	24

Actual hours may vary as program needs are determined.

City Estimates

The following is the ACS estimate for operating the pool after Labor Day, 2008:

Operation Item Description	Estimated Cost
Aquatics Director	\$50,000
Assistant	28,000
Life guards	80,000
CUPF fee	32,000
General maintenance	12,450
Insurance	1,000
Chemical supplies	2,000
Safety Equipment and supplies	1,300
Total	\$206,750

In addition, the Recreation Department will need \$21,700 for the Pool Pak service contract.

Recommendations

The working group recommends the following:

1. MCPS will pay for all operating expenses for school programs during school hours.
2. MCPS will contract for repair of the pool.
3. The County Recreation Department will be responsible for the operations and maintenance contracts.
4. The County will contract with ACS for programming and operations.
5. The City Recreation staff and committee will assist ACS for program outreach.
6. Pool revenues will go toward maintaining and operating the pool. Any pool revenues collected in FY 09 will be applied toward future operating costs.

Conclusion

When implemented, this proposed partnership will enable reopening and continued operation of the Piney Branch Elementary School pool for ongoing service to County residents living in the City of Takoma Park. This will ensure that City residents continue to enjoy the benefits of County recreational services, as do other County residents.